The Portsmouth Papers

Published by Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth PO1 2AL

No. 34 January 1981
Price 75p

34

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The PORTSMOUTH PAPERS *are published by Portsmouth City Council, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2AL*

Issue Number 34 January 1981

ISBN 0 901559 42 3

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Cover:

Southsea Pier about ten years after the Battle. The entrance has been covered since 1874, the buildings were extended, and after the construction of the Harbour Station in 1876 the tramway was no longer needed.

Portsmouth City Museum

Printed by Eyre & Spottiswoode Limited at Grosvenor Press Portsmouth

THE BATTLE OF SOUTHSEA

Dr J. L. Field

Southsea is special. It is Portsmouth's breathing space, its playground, and its smartest residential suburb, where amusement arcades and italian-style villas give a unique mixture of elegance and vulgarity.[1] One reason for Southsea's popularity is the Common, several acres of open grassland free from buildings, cars and fences. Since it was drained in the early nineteenth century, the Common has been used by local people and visitors alike, for games, for strolling, or just for plain sitting down on. It is a space where people come to relax and enjoy themselves. And because it was so popular among such a wide cross-section of Portsmouth's inhabitants, the Common was drawn into a struggle over how exactly it was to be used, a struggle that culminated in the Battle of Southsea.

In the summer of 1874 a huge crowd of men and women assembled on the Common to attack a barrier which kept them off a few square yards of land. They fought with special constables, they fought with the borough police, and ultimately they fought with soldiers, in a struggle that lasted for four days. They heard the Riot Act read, for the last time in the City's history. Many citizens were injured, and – it was said – much harm was done to Portsmouth's reputation. Yet not only were thousands of citizens prepared to risk arrest or injury for the sake of a patch of land; they were proud of their part in the famous Battle, and saw it as a struggle for principle. It was, they felt, a battle for the right of free access to the Common for all ordinary people, and for the right of public way along the beach.

Crowd disturbances were not unusual in Victorian England.[2] Working men and women were unable to vote before the 1867 Reform Act admitted a privileged minority of skilled men to the parliamentary franchise. The authorities were under no compulsion to consult working people on how their lives were to be run, and the result was predictable enough. When large numbers of people felt that government had ignored their interests, they took the only weapon that was available to them: the crowd riot. Yet few such riots lasted more than an evening or afternoon, and they were usually broken up by the local authorities with the help of police and troops. An example from Winchester in 1864 will illustrate the short-lived nature of most such disturbances: it is in the words of an army officer called in by the Mayor to help quell the disturbances:

> 'The cause of this riotous demonstration was occasioned by a large Field named Oram's Arbour which up to a recent period was always considered as having been left to the people as a playground, and also used as a Sheep Fair, being taken possession of by the Corporation, a road cut through the centre of it, and a part allotted to be turned into a promenade. The Mob being enraged at what they considered their rights, covered the road over with sods, fired a temporary building on the ground, having first driven the Police and Special Constables off with stones, and were the Police said about to proceed to other extremes against some dwelling houses belonging to a Mr. Carter, one of the Corporation, who was particularly obnoxious on account of the active part he had in this business, but after the appearance of the Troops the excitement gradually subsided'.[3]

The circumstances are at first sight similar to those of the Southsea Battle: enclosure of old Commons, successful action by the crowd, ultimate intervention by troops. But there are also significant differences. The Winchester disturbance was very brief, lasting merely one evening; the target was the Corporation, whereas Portsmouth Corporation were definitely unsympathetic to the authors of the enclosure; the Winchester disturbance involved an entire field, the Portsmouth one a few square yards only. Why, then, was the Portsmouth action so prolonged? Why were the local authorities inclined not to uphold the law and send for troops at once? Why should such a small and apparently trivial enclosure provoke such hostility?

There are several reasons why the Battle of Southsea occured as it did. In the first place, Southsea itself had always been a contested space, and disagreements constantly arose over the way that the suburb was developing. The main cause of tension was that Southsea was a select, genteel suburb, planted on the outskirts of a fast-growing industrial city. Second, a distinctive radical tradition had developed in local politics, organizing and giving expression to many popular views and aspirations. The radical leaders set up the confrontation on the Common that developed into the Battle, and they helped to sustain the campaign in the days that followed. Third, it was possible to call upon a lively tradition of crowd actions in Portsmouth. There were a number of occasions when simple disagreements had spilled into riots, sometimes very violent ones, making it possible to understand why the crowd on Southsea Common often appeared to be so well-organized. Fourth, and last, the Pier Company that was responsible for the enclosure was itself the object of a particular dislike. Some of the company directors were

rather doubtful characters, and one or two of them were downright unpopular with many inhabitants. A handful of men were in a position to take decisions which could affect the lives of thousands; but they could not do so, as the Company discovered, without arousing a storm of opposition.

Southsea and Social Tension

'The class consciousness of the Victorians', Professor Harold Perkin has written, 'was nowhere more evident than in their pleasure resorts'.[4] Each seaside town has its own tone, often set by the largest local landowner: in Folkestone, for instance, Lord Radnor refused to permit certain kinds of development that might lower the social tone and attract 'the wrong kind of people'.[5] Blackpool, on the other hand, has always hoped to attract large numbers of working class visitors. The British have a keen nose for sniffing out their neighbours' social standing, and our choice of resort tends to be governed by the type of people we want to mix with. Portsmouth, however, could never be another Folkestone, attracting the genteel and wealthy only; it has a large industrial population, many of whom live in or close to Southsea, and many of whom wish to use Southsea's amenities. Southsea has never, therefore, had a purely genteel social tone.

From the outset, Southsea housed a social mixture. The artisan streets of Croxton Town around Flint Street existed side by side with the genteel terraces. The story of Southsea's Victorian development has been well told by Dr. Riley,[6] and needs only to be sketched in here. Southsea's provisions for middle and upper class dwellings were expanded in the years after the Napoleonic Wars, and after them came leisure facilities like the Assembly Rooms erected in 1817. By summer 1821 it was reported that 'we have not houses capacious enough to accommodate many large families (of visitors) who have been obliged this week to proceed further along the coast'.[7] Visitors in this decade included the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV), who gave permission to the owner of the Assembly Rooms to rename his premises in honour of the visit. Some visitors liked the area so much that they decided to stay, like Alexander Baring of the famous London banking family, who bought forty acres by Lumps Fort for the erection of a summer villa.[8] By the early 1830s, before Thomas Ellis Owen started his major developments, Southsea was already developing a reputation as a secluded seaside suburb.

The resort's claim to gentility was confirmed when convict labour built the Esplanade along the crown of the beach. The Esplanade, completed in 1849 with the help of the Lieutenant Governor, Lord Fitzclarence, epitomized the co-operation that had developed between the military authorities and those who wished to develop Southsea. Now 'carriage folk' could ride sedately up and down the seafront. Part of the Common itself, twenty years previously a salt marsh known as 'the Morass', had been filled in with gravel, drained, and grassed over. Yet the local newspaper, although grateful for the improvement, suspected Fitzclarence's motives.[9] The criticisms were developed by some local councillors, who resented the privileged denizens of Owen's spacious villas and terraces.

Councillors particularly resented spending hard-earned rates upon pampered, aristocratic Southsea. William Bilton, a chemist from Landport, was a radical Alderman with Chartist connections who roundly denounced Owen on a number of occasions. While Owen was Mayor in 1848, the police received a number of complaints about burglaries in Southsea, where the shrubberies and crescents made the isolated villas ideal targets for thieves. The Town Council overwhelmingly threw out the request for a police station, arguing that the rates were already high enough as they were. 'Look at the modest request that is made', thundered Bilton; 'it is that the poor ratepayers are to be taxed merely to protect the plate and wine of the rich inhabitants of Southsea'.[10] Not until the 1870s did the Council finally build a police station in Southsea.

Southsea's inhabitants returned the ill-feeling. In 1839 they complained that they were grossly under-represented in the Portsmouth Improvement Commission. In 1858, when Landport and Southsea were given a joint Improvement Commission, there were grumbles that the two were incompatible. Within two years, Owen was leading Southsea in a demand that the forced marriage be broken up.[11] Local politics were despised by much of Southsea, many of whose voters consigned 'their voting-paper to the waste basket or the pocket as speedily as possible after delivery'.[12] The same went for poor relief: 'there is scarcely a gentleman, in the real acceptation of the term', thought the Southsea newspaper, 'who will allow himself to be nominated as a Guardian of the Poor'.[13] The antics of the rest of the civic authorities were beneath Southsea's dignity.

By 1874, Southsea had developed a seige mentality. A young architect, who had worked on St. Helen's Park in eastern Southsea, felt bitter about local attitudes:

> 'There is little local sympathy – plenty of ridicule and opposition to be found, but no material support in the Town when such works are projected, and scarcely sufficient encouragement after they are realized – gentlemen who have the courage of their opinions, and who carry out successfully such difficult operations deserve the highest honour, and

the greatest consideration from their fellow-townsmen'.[14]

Complaints such as this fit badly into our received notion of the Victorian entrepreneur as a beloved hero, inventor, pioneer and general benefactor. Why should town councillors, all of whom were themselves businessmen of one kind or another, have given such deep offence to the Southsea entrepreneurs?

Culturally, the Landport worthies, like many of their fellow-councillors, tended to be nonconformist in religion and restrained in life-style. William Bilton, for instance, was a methodist. Although he earned almost £70 a year from the rent of his shop to Timothy White, and was Chamberlain for the Borough to boot, his family kept only one servant.[15] The Bonham Carter family, still influential in the town's political life, were unitarians. But the faith of Southsea was decidedly anglican, and the main church – St. Judes – was probably the only one in Victorian Portsmouth that was not chronically short of funds. Southsea's leisure pursuits were often flamboyant – fancy dress balls, lavish dinners, hunts, archery. Southsea's greatest contribution to Portsmouth's temperance movement was the drunken behaviour of officers at a dinner held to celebrate Fitzclarence's generosity to the town. Local political leaders were outraged as the drunken officers jeered speakers and mocked the local M.P.[16] No one would deny that the victorian cult of respectability involved some hypocrisy and a great deal of priggish sniffing. Nevertheless, drunkenness, ostentation and a near-popish religion would have caused real distress and offence to the nonconformist conscience. It should also be remembered that Landport and Portsea were full of men and women who worked for a living: manufacturers, shopkeepers, artisans, needlewomen, labourers. By contrast, Southsea's wealth was largely *rentier*, drawn from investments and property, and therefore viewed as ill-gotten. The small businessmen and working people saw themselves, in Bilton's words, as 'the industrious classes'; the Southsea elite were idle parasites.[17]

The divisions between Southsea and the rest of the town could also be seen in politics. Thomas Ellis Owen found it hard to win a council seat, although once in the chamber he reached the Mayoralty in 1848. Thereafter he started to upset his fellow-Liberals. He objected to the 'political' resolutions they passed, and he tried to get Fitzclarence one of the town's parliamentary seats; as Fitzclarence was a tory, and well-disliked as a person, this won Owen few friends.[18] Southsea generally returned tories to the council, which was dominated by liberals and radicals from the other areas.

The dislike of many local social leaders for Southsea's new citizens was not based upon class antagonism. How could it be? The council, after all, represented propertied men, and it was the influx of wealthy men and women that made Southsea what it was. In some ways, Southsea represented a positive advantage to the men who ran local politics: there were new customers for goods and services, there were wealthy ratepayers who alleviated the burden on other areas, there were new (if not generous) sources for aid for the local charities and schools. The divisions were perhaps political as much as anything; on a national canvas, they were reflected in Gladstone's famous opposition between the 'classes' and 'the masses', the aristocracy and the people.

If class antagonisms were not at the root of the hostility towards Southsea, however, they certainly were present in an indirect way. As the number of genteel visitors increased, friction with working people who used the same amenities increased also. Many aspects of working class behaviour gave offence to the inhabitants: the insults endured by the congregation of St. Judes, the oaths of cabmen at their stands, the rowdy elements who attended regattas, even the filthy habits of tramps.[19] But the loudest complaints were voiced in the summer months, when strollers and 'carriage folk' were faced by the sight of dozens, perhaps even hundreds of working men swimming off Southsea beach. Granted that this was before the days of swimming costumes, it still seems improbable that nude swimming would fill the correspondence columns and conversations of polite society; but in Victorian Britain it seems to have been a very serious social grievance against the working class.

What is more interesting, however, is the response of the local authorities to the indignant complaints that came in every summer. Attempts to outlaw nude swimming were firmly resisted. The *Telegraph*, for example, denounced the 'carriage gentry' in 1849; why should they object to 'the commonalty exhibiting their dirty hides . . . Our answer to the carriage gentry is, what business have you there?' The Town Council agreed, rejecting a bye-law on the subject as 'being an infringement on the rights and privileges of the people'.[20] The complaints were still coming in in the 1870s.

These conflicts are interesting in their own right, for they show that Southsea's development was by no means a smooth and inevitable process. Southsea grew as the result of human choices, struggles, and conflicts and compromises. The developers and architects, of whom T. E. Owen was the most important, had to work in material conditions that were not of their own choosing: local landholding patterns, local building materials, local investment opportunities, and above all local attitudes.

Uniformed Pier servants guard the entrance
Portsmouth City Records Office

The Radical Tradition

Portsmouth has always had a weak tradition of independent working class politics, but its radical tradition is a very distinguished one. Epitomized by the courage of the Carter family, the heritage reached back into the eighteenth century struggles for freedom of speech and assembly. In the 1830s, no-one was more delighted than the local authorities when Parliament and the corporations were reformed, and the Carter family had a national reputation as radical reformers. But Chartism found little support in the town,[21] and by the 1850s radicalism was represented largely by one man, John Augustus Howell Howell. Howell was Portsmouth's answer to *Pere Duchesne*, a boisterous tallow-chandler from Point, who sat on the Council and on the Board of Guardians. He seems to have had a largely working class base; he was a prominent Forester, and chaired meetings for striking builders, the carpenters and joiners' union, the Watermen's Association, and the local co-operative. Howell was a free-lance, not attached to any political organization, but widely accepted as a leader because of his outspoken championship of popular causes.

The only organized working class political group in the 1870s was the Portsmouth Democratic Association, which had developed out of a local Reform League branch. The secretary, a Landport carpenter named Thomas Ediss, was a member of the Liberal Association committee.[22] A co-operator, a freethinker, and above all a champion of the vote for working men, Ediss had led physical attacks on anti-Catholic speakers on the Common, and was beaten up by Orangemen a year later. His absorption into the Liberal Party was typical of the career of working men who kept Portsmouth's Reform League alive. The few trade unions were found chiefly among the most highly skilled: stonemasons, carpenters, engineers and printers. The highly-organized dockyard craftsmen felt as yet no need for formal trade unionism;[23] and the unskilled had shown no signs of ability to organize at all. Men like Ediss therefore had little alternative but support for the Liberals.

The radical tradesmen like John Howell had a much firmer basis for independent political action. Working men, especially in the Yard, might be victimized for their politics; several were to meet such an obstacle. Small businessmen, on the other hand, were relatively independent: they had no direct employer, and customers would only boycott them if they seriously disagreed with their views. Thus there arose, in Landport, Old Portsmouth, and Portsea, a small but vociferous group of populist radicals, neither liberal nor tory in their allegiance, and indeed disowned by both of the mainstream parties.

At least four populist radicals sat on the Town Council in 1874, Howell being the most vocal. Manoah Jepps, a councillor for St. Thomas's Ward (Old Portsmouth) from 1873, was an upholsterer by trade, a teetotaller, and a working men's club committeeman. Barnard Charles Miller, who sat for St. Thomas's from 1868, was an undertaker; in 1874 he lent his undertaker's van to the cause, carrying scaffolding and grappling irons on to the Common. James Killpartrick, a grocer and beerseller from Kingston, was elected for St. Paul's in 1873, and was also a Guardian of the Poor. At his death in 1887 the local paper described him as a Conservative – a judgement that would certainly have displeased local tories, and might well have annoyed Killpartrick himself.[24] Last, and far from least, came Howell himself; given his leading role as spokesman, it is worth looking at him a little more closely.

Howell's politics were certainly not those of the reputable solicitors, doctors and shopkeepers who dominated the local Liberal Party. He came from rather shady origins. He had started working life as a beerseller, and was prosecuted under the licensing laws in 1849. In 1857 he had to leave politics for a while, when it was discovered that he had fathered an illegitimate child. The *Telegraph* rejoiced that Howell was 'now, we fear, politically dead to the world!'[25] In a short while, he was back, as popular and outspoken as ever, accusing one of Southsea's wealthier inhabitants of being a brothel-owner, for instance. He rejoined the Town Council in 1861; in 1867 he was even elected a sub-superintendent by the special constables enrolled to counter Fenian terrorism. His politics were radical-democratic: he was a supporter of Garibaldi, of compulsory education for pauper children, of higher pay and shorter hours for working people, and of course of household suffrage.[26] Neither he nor his fellow radicals, however, were early socialists. Barney Miller, for example, was quite ambivalent over trade unionism, and opposed allowing the National Union of Elementary Teachers to hold their annual conference in the town in the late 1880s.[27]

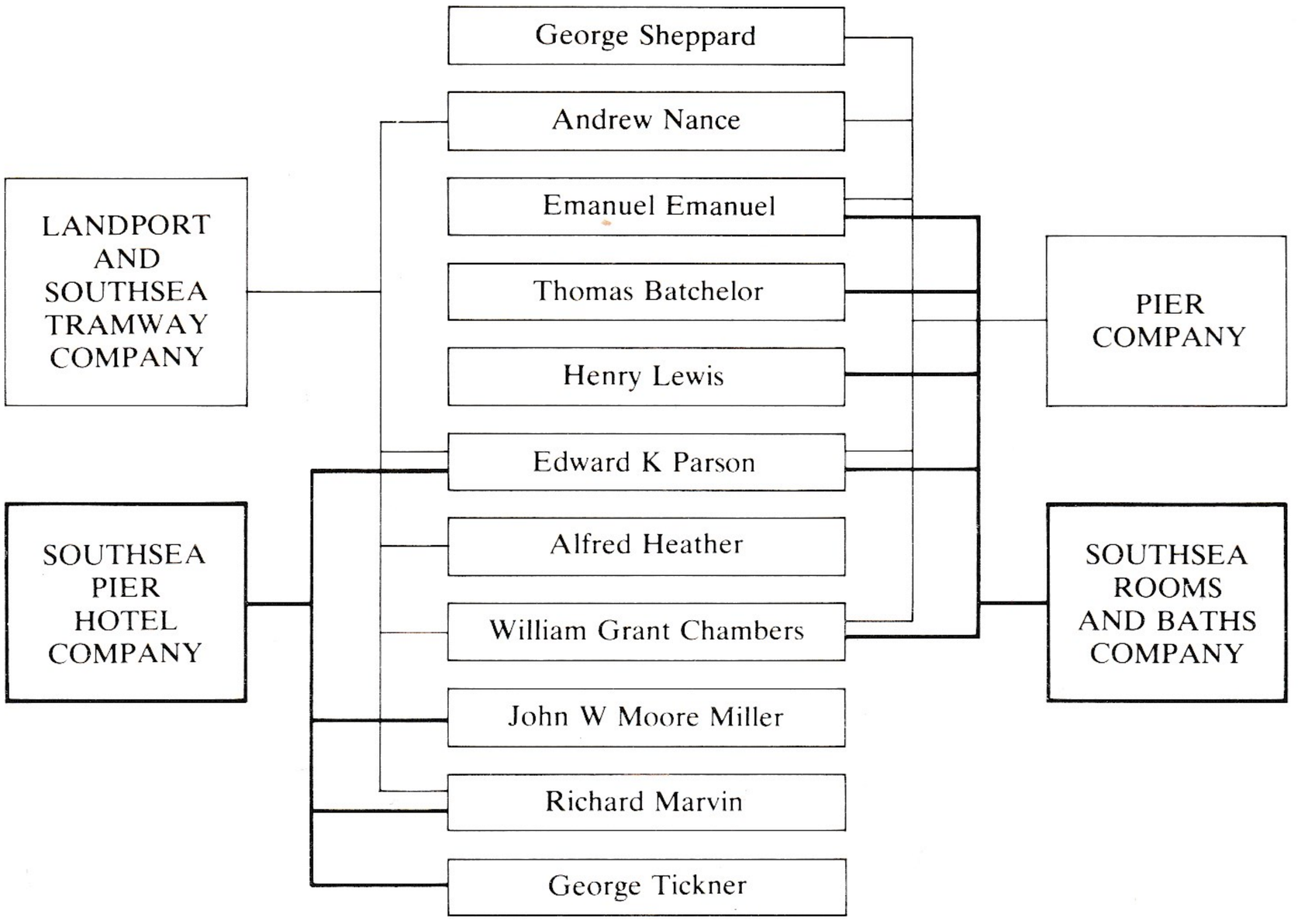
The style of popular radicalism was quite unlike that of the other parties: it was often aggressive, and never deferential. The atmosphere is well caught by simply listing the goings-on at Board of Guardians meetings during the one year, 1870. In January Killpartrick tried to punch the workhouse governor, led a group of hecklers into another meeting, and opposed the customary vote of thanks when the workhouse matron resigned. Howell was thrown bodily from one Board meeting by the governor and drill master, called another Guardian a 'red herring' who had eaten so much embezzled food that he 'looks like a couple of Jews rolled into one', then tried to throw the 'red herring' out of the window. In December Howell and Killpartrick produced evidence that the workhouse governor was underfeeding the pauper children; they abused the man so fiercely that he burst into tears in the Board meeting. 'No bellowing', said Howell unsympathetically; 'be a man'. Killpartrick tried to hit the governor with a chair, at which stage the other Guardians scuttled out of the room, bringing the meeting to an end.[28] Parish politics was a training ground for those who lacked the social standing to rise in the mainstream parties.

Howell and his three fellow-radicals enjoyed widespread popular support. Portsmouth had a larger number of owner-occupiers than most towns, and because they were ratepayers, many working class householders enjoyed a vote in local elections.[29] Many tenants were also enfranchised during the 1850s when Portsmouth adopted the Small Tenements Rating Act, which allowed rates to be levied on the landlord rather than the occupier. Working class voters, and particularly the dockyardmen, were blamed for Howell's election in 1870.[30] The 'plate and wine' of Southsea were unable to intimidate men who were subject neither as tenants nor as employees. However, property still dominated local elections, and the radical councillors were little more than a nuisance, for all their shouting. But a nuisance was bad enough for the *Southsea Observer*. 'It behoves all of us', admonished the editor, 'to do our best to remove everything which may be calculated to bring us into contempt with our neighbours and those who visit us during the season'.[31] But by the time these words were published, the Battle of Southsea was already under way.

Popular Disturbances

The best way for working people to air a serious grievance during the nineteenth century was to have a riot. Eighteenth century crowd actions followed a well-established routine, generally being directed at unpopular folk-demons like bakers and millers, and often treated with tolerance by the authorities.[32] Portsmouth had seen several such disturbances: food riots in 1795 and 1796, the Spithead mutiny in 1797, and in 1816 a rowdy demonstration against a shopkeeper who was suspected of trying to undermine a co-operative society.[33] The first half of the nineteenth century saw measures taken to impose public order, in particular the emergence of full-time professional police forces between 1829 and 1839. The decline of Chartism after 1848 confirmed the demise of crowd action as a way of putting pressure upon the authorities, although it is clear that rioting still survives as a sporadic form of action in the present day.

The presence of large numbers of servicemen, often the most bitter rivals, kept rioting alive in Portsmouth. The Queen Street riot of 1850 is probably typical, arising out of a brothel brawl between a soldier and a seaman. Fighting went on for four days, finishing in a mass battle involving some 2,000 combatants, the military guard, and the borough police. A month later, it was said that gangs of forty to fifty boys were still playing at 'sailors against soldiers', and attacking children from other streets.[34] On a smaller scale, a hundred sailors sacked a White's Row brothel in 1856 after one of their comrades complained of maltreatment; a detachment of 300 troops was sent to quell the disturbance, but not one sailor could be arrested, for reasons that can easily be guessed at.[35] These riots both involved servicemen, and drink; one or two civilians may have become involved in disturbances between soldiers and sailors (in 1850 local men took the opportunity of attacking the military guards); but on the whole, inter-



Sources: Tram Co: Hants Tel, 30 May 1863; Pier Hotel Co: Hants Tel., 3 Oct 1863; Rooms & Baths Co: Prospectus, Saunders Coll., P.C.L; Pier Co: Hants Tel., 16 June 1860.

service rivalry or pub squabbles limited participation, and also made these riots somewhat aimless. While they could easily get out of hand, and were certainly violent, they were probably inevitable in a large industrial city where both army and navy had a base.

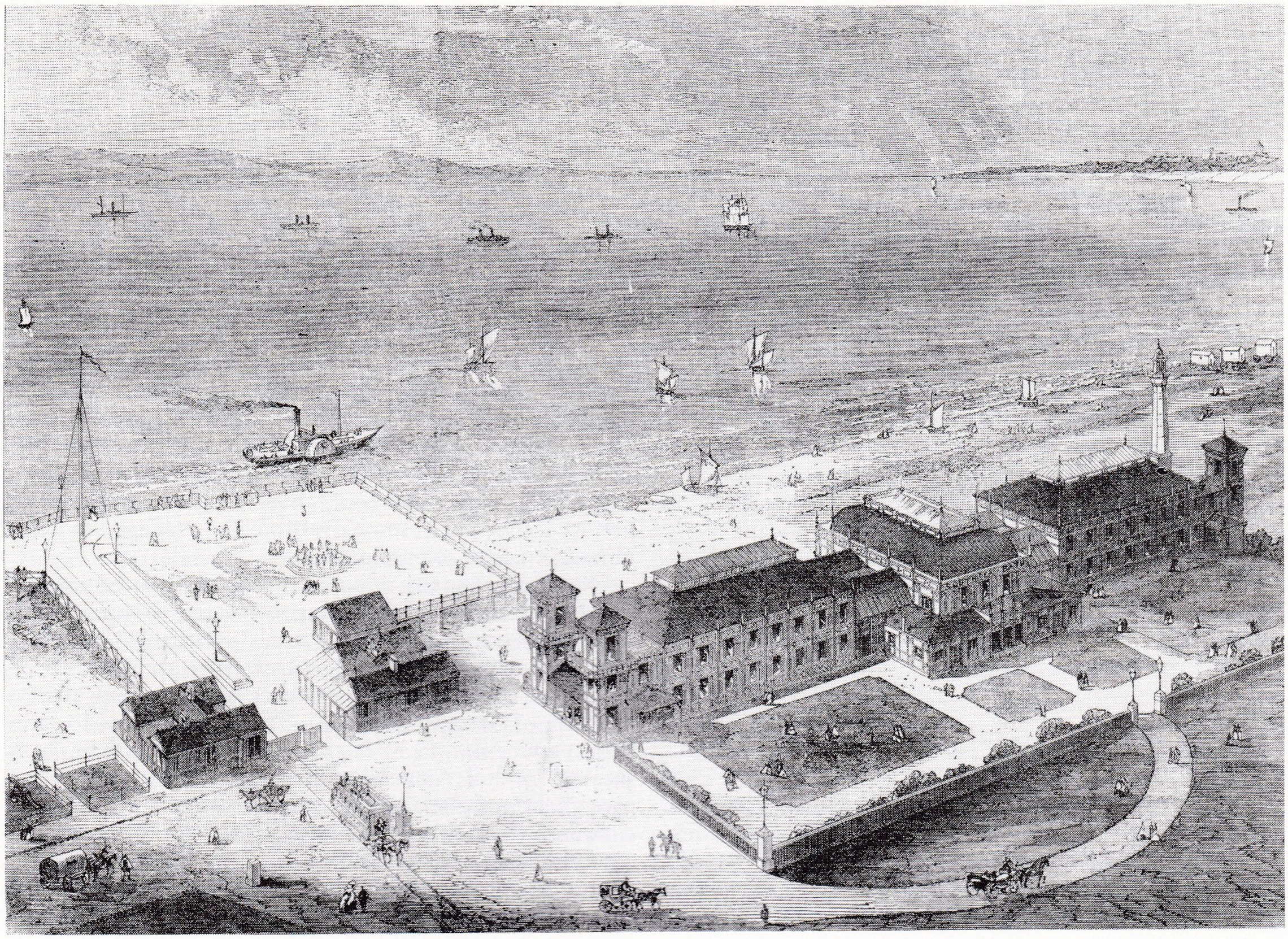
There were also a number of disturbances which did not primarily involve servicemen. The Landport riot of 1866 was purely a civilian affair, in which a boisterous conflict over differing moral codes exploded into fatal violence. It started when the landlord of the Heart in Hand gave some lads a gallon of ale to 'tin-kettle' a temperance advocate, Noah Wareham. Wareham, a wheelwright and Sunday school teacher, was at his home in Montagu Street when the lads started to beat their kettles. A crowd gathered, and stones were thrown. Wareham, armed with a stick, went out to put up the shutters to protect the windows. Tempers flared; the crowd got hold of Wareham and kicked him to death. Although part of the local working class community, Wareham was very much an outsider because of his religious and temperance views. Despite great alarm in the local press over the 'Diabolical Outrage at Landport', the lads responsible were prosecuted for manslaughter rather than murder, and none was given more than twelve months' imprisonment.[36] It was rare for actual death to result, but street violence remained common, often on a large scale.

In drawing a line between events that we define as a riot and those more properly described as a demonstration, we must be wary of swallowing the authorities' definitions of the situation too uncritically. The authorities were likely to choose their definition according to the nature of the participants, defining disturbances by servicemen as riots, for instance, but taking a more lenient view of crowds who disturbed temperance meetings. One borderline example is the spate of anti-Salvation Army riots that swept the south coast in the late nineteenth century, often with the implicit approval of the local authorities.[37] Portsmouth had its share of such cases, such as the burning of Sarah Robinson – 'the Soldier's Friend' – in effigy.[38] Another might be the street demonstrations by prostitutes in 1861 and 1867, following the prosecution of brothel keepers. The 1867 demonstration came after a Smith's Lane beershop keeper had been fined for 'harbouring prostitutes'; on that evening a group of the women marched to St. Mary's Street and some were arrested, and let off later with a caution. On the following morning, some three hundred women marched to Grand Parade, making 'discordant noises' and pelting policemen. Both in 1861 and 1867, the protests were successful, in that the prosecutions were discontinued.[39]

The violence of Portsmouth's popular culture came in large measure from the presence of the garrison and navy base. Many civilian working people – especially men – accepted such 'respectable' notions as thrift, self-help, and education.[40] Servicemen, however, remained largely impervious to the many efforts made by campaigning clergymen and others, to eradicate intemperance and instill a large dose of respectability. Two circumstances helped fuel the rivalry between 'lobster' and 'bluejacket': the ready availability of drink and prostitutes. Many servicemen carried simple but effective weapons around with them: the soldiers' belt, swirled around the head so that the heavy metal buckle slashed your opponent's face; or the seaman's knife. The result was a robust popular culture that was not synonymous with, but clearly affected, the local civilian working class. It was certainly the case that ordinary local people, and not just servicemen, provided the rank and file for the Battle.

Southsea Esplanade Pier Company

Permission to build a pier off the Clarence Esplanade was granted in 1852, but not until 1860 did the Company start

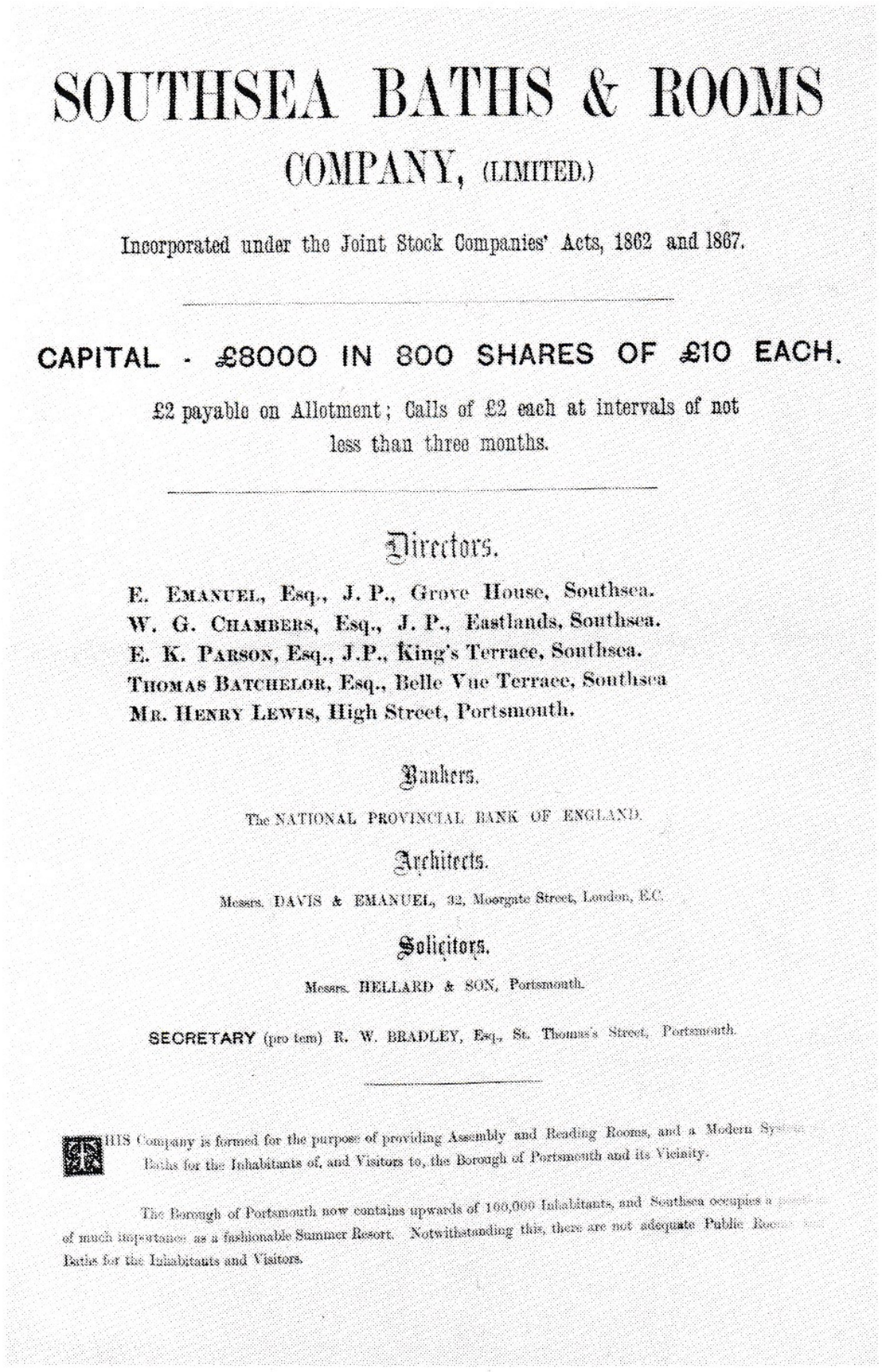


An aerial view of the Pier, Assembly Rooms and Baths
Portsmouth City Records Office

to raise share capital. The Pier, opened on 1 June 1861, proved extremely popular with the better-off residents and visitors. Paying a penny a head to enter, visitors paid out £538 16*s* 8*d* in summer 1862; ten years later, they paid in £2,245 16*s* 6*d*.[41] The 800 shares were spread among almost 250 proprietors, but with significant concentrations in the hands of W. G. Chambers (35 shares), Andrew Nance (63 shares) and George Sheppard (32 shares). The shareholders were receiving a ten per cent dividend, which was twice as much as they might have expected if they had invested in manufacturing or government stocks. By the early twentieth century, it was said that a single £10 share fetched £59 on the open market.[42] The Pier was close enough to Old Portsmouth to attract military and naval officers, and close enough to the Southsea terraces and hotels to attract visitors. Moreover, until Portsmouth Harbour station was opened in 1876, Clarence Pier carried most of the passenger traffic for the Isle of Wight. It was not just another seaside amusement, then, but a sound economic investment.

Indeed, the Pier was such a success that its owners started to promote a number of associated ventures. In 1862 they proposed a Southsea Pier Hotel, erected two years later on land at the southern end of Bellevue Terrace; the building alone cost £14,700.[43] In 1865 a Tram Company started to ply between the Pier and the main railway station. In 1869 another company was set up, building Baths and Rooms a few yards to the west of the Pier on the site of Hollingworth's old premises; the work started in the spring of 1870.[44] The investment required for these projects was substantial: the starting capital of the Pier was £40,000, that of the Hotel £10,000, that of the Baths and Rooms £8,000; the tramline was said to have cost £10,000 to build, and the hotel £14,700.[45] Who were the entrepreneurs that raised these sums?

At the heart of the Southsea web stood a small group of three or four men: Emanuel Emanuel, William Grant Chambers, Edward K. Parson, and Andrew Nance. Interlocking directorships were frequent: Henry Hollingsworth, secretary to the Pier Company, was also secretary for the Pier Hotel and the Tram Companies.[46] The diagram on opposite page, of interlocking directorships, shows a web so closely woven as to be somewhat tangled, so tightly are the four interests intertwined. Edward Parson was a director of all four undertakings; he was a typical Southsea *rentier*, a gentleman of leisure from King's Terrace with his fingers deep in several local pies, who was fifty-two in 1874. The close interweaving of these men's interests is not particularly surprising, since the enterprises were all intended to fulfill the same aim: the extension and development of Southsea's resort potential. However, to carry this through was only possible by men of power and wealth.



SOUTHSEA BATHS & ROOMS

COMPANY, (LIMITED.)

Incorporated under the Joint Stock Companies' Acts, 1862 and 1867.

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£2 payable on Allotment; Calls of £2 each at intervals of not less than three months.

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Messrs. HELLARD & SON, Portsmouth.

SECRETARY (pro tem) R. W. BRADLEY, Esq., St. Thomas's Street, Portsmouth.

THIS Company is formed for the purpose of providing Assembly and Reading Rooms, and a Modern System of Baths for the Inhabitants of, and Visitors to, the Borough of Portsmouth and its Vicinity.

The Borough of Portsmouth now contains upwards of 160,000 Inhabitants, and Southsea occupies a position of much importance as a fashionable Summer Resort. Notwithstanding this, there are not adequate Public Rooms or Baths for the Inhabitants and Visitors.

Prospectus inviting investment in the Assembly Rooms and Baths Company, 1868
Portsmouth City Library

The men who founded the Pier Company possessed sizeable economic interests elsewhere in the town. Southsea was their first concern: Nance, Emanuel and Sheppard all took an active part in the Southsea Improvement Association founded in 1863. The Association endorsed Henry Hollingsworth's candidature for the Council in the elections that year, and went on to campaign for the separation of Southsea from Landport on the Improvement Commission.[47] As a developer of Southsea, Emanuel probably came second only to T. E. Owen. He had built Lennox Lodge, it was reported, together with other houses 'in the same neighbourhood, which were occupied by men possessing a certain amount of money' (the coy words are those of a local surgeon). Emanuel was also a useful go-between in negotiations involving the Council and the military authorities; he had helped persuade Fitzclarence to improve Common and Esplanade, and promoted the new Victoria Park.[48] Emanuel was partner in a Portsea-based silversmith's business, responsible among other achievements for manufacturing the Goodwood Cup and producing decorative naval badges, as well as serving a high class civilian trade.[49] Andrew Nance, another founder of the Pier Company, was also managing director of the Floating Bridge for many years and was a railway director as well; Nance farmed 410 acres at Baffins.[50] Chambers and Parsons were also Floating Bridge Directors. Three of the Pier Company directors owned large holdings of land: Chambers, for instance, was said to be worth £345 a year in rent. This was as much as five skilled workmen could have earned in the same period, if they put in some overtime and managed to avoid illness, injury or unemployment.[51]

The Pier Company directors were also men of political standing. All of them were magistrates, a position of great respectability, for which a considerable property qualification was required. Three directors were Aldermen (Emanuel, Chambers and Nance), and one had been a councillor (George Sheppard). The only one not to have been a councillor, E. K. Parson, was chairman of the Portsmouth Liberal Association.[52] Emanuel Emanuel was a prominent member of the small but influential Jewish community; he had been elected chairman of the branch committee of Jewish deputies in 1840, and was active in several Jewish charities.[53] He had been instrumental in the campaign against the old Free Mart Fair, successfully abolishing it in 1848. First elected to the Council in 1841, Emanuel was forced to resign when a local radical drew attention to the fact that as a Jew he was unable to swear the necessary oaths. Subsequently elected in 1844, Emanuel sat thereafter, twice acting as Mayor before his death in 1888.[54] If Emanuel was probably the most influential, however, each director was a man who counted in local politics (see also appendix).

Men as powerful as these were unlikely to be popular among all sections of society. All the Southsea entrepreneurs had rather different life-styles from the modest men and women who ran the shops and workshops of Landport and Portsea. The Hollingsworth family were slightly shady characters. James Hollingsworth, the father, was something of a speculator, investing in the Gosport ferry and a local railway, and published the *Hampshire Chronicle*. But the *Chronicle* had to be sold off to a Winchester based firm; in 1823 the Corporation prosecuted him for non-payment of rates; in 1833 he was declared bankrupt.[55] The son, Henry Hollingsworth, also had wide business interests; apart from his company secretaryships, he also had shares in the Floating Bridge. Henry too went bankrupt, absconded amidst charges of embezzlement, and was eventually arrested in London.[56] Emanuel Emanuel was disliked locally on a number of grounds. For one thing, he was Jewish, which aroused the latent anti-semitism of many locals. For another, he was too fond of hob-nobbing with Fitzclarence, King William's illegitimate son who was renowned as a brutal disciplinarian, fond of cat and drum-head.[57] The *Telegraph* combined the two criticisms, for example, complaining that an 'officious little

Jew' was trying to have the Common renamed 'Clarence Park'.[58] Critics with long memories probably also recalled a minor youthful brush with the law, when Emanuel had been fined for assaulting a pawnbroker.[59] For many small businessmen, and even for some of Southsea's urban gentry, the Pier Company promoters probably seemed a bit on the sharp side.

There is certainly evidence that the Southsea entrepreneurs were unpopular, even among their own class. The Tram Company was heavily criticized in the local press in 1864. Three years later, a crowded public meeting heard the Tram Company denounced by respectable Liberals such as Captain George Evelegh (manager of the Bonham Carters' brewery) as well as by radicals like Councillor Howell.[60] The Pier Company itself was fiercely attacked, for diverting trade away from the highly-profitable Victoria Pier in Old Portsmouth; among the grumblers was Barney Miller.[61] The licensing magistrates refused applications from Hollingsworth for his Rooms and from the Pier refreshment room itself. The Pier's application was probably not helped by a petition in its support, which turned out to have been signed by a 'Mr X', 'Satanella', 'Le diable boiteux', and other doubtful characters. Only after a second application was the Pier allowed a licence.[62] There were also rumours surrounding the supposed dishonesty of the Pier Hotel Company's directors, as well as the open disgrace of Hollingsworth's malpractices.[63] However, such sentiments were more likely to disturb local people than visitors to or even residents in Southsea.

By 1874 the Pier and the Southsea Rooms were both operational. The Pier was hammer-headed, its handle being some 160 feet long, the head 250 feet wide. Promenaders would flock on, particularly on Sundays; there were daily concerts by military bands as the promenaders gazed across the Solent to the Isle of Wight. Later, in the 1880s, an elegant pavilion was built; drawings in the 1860s and '70s, though, show a low, open construction bounded by waist-high railings. During the six summer months of 1872 over 200,000 people paid to come in through the turnstile, while another 23,000 came on the horse-drawn trams that ran directly onto the pier head. On an average day, something like 1,300 people would visit the pier.[64] At the far end, a small steam crane took the luggage for the Isle of Wight ferries – a small, if unsightly, sign of the Pier's prosperous trade.

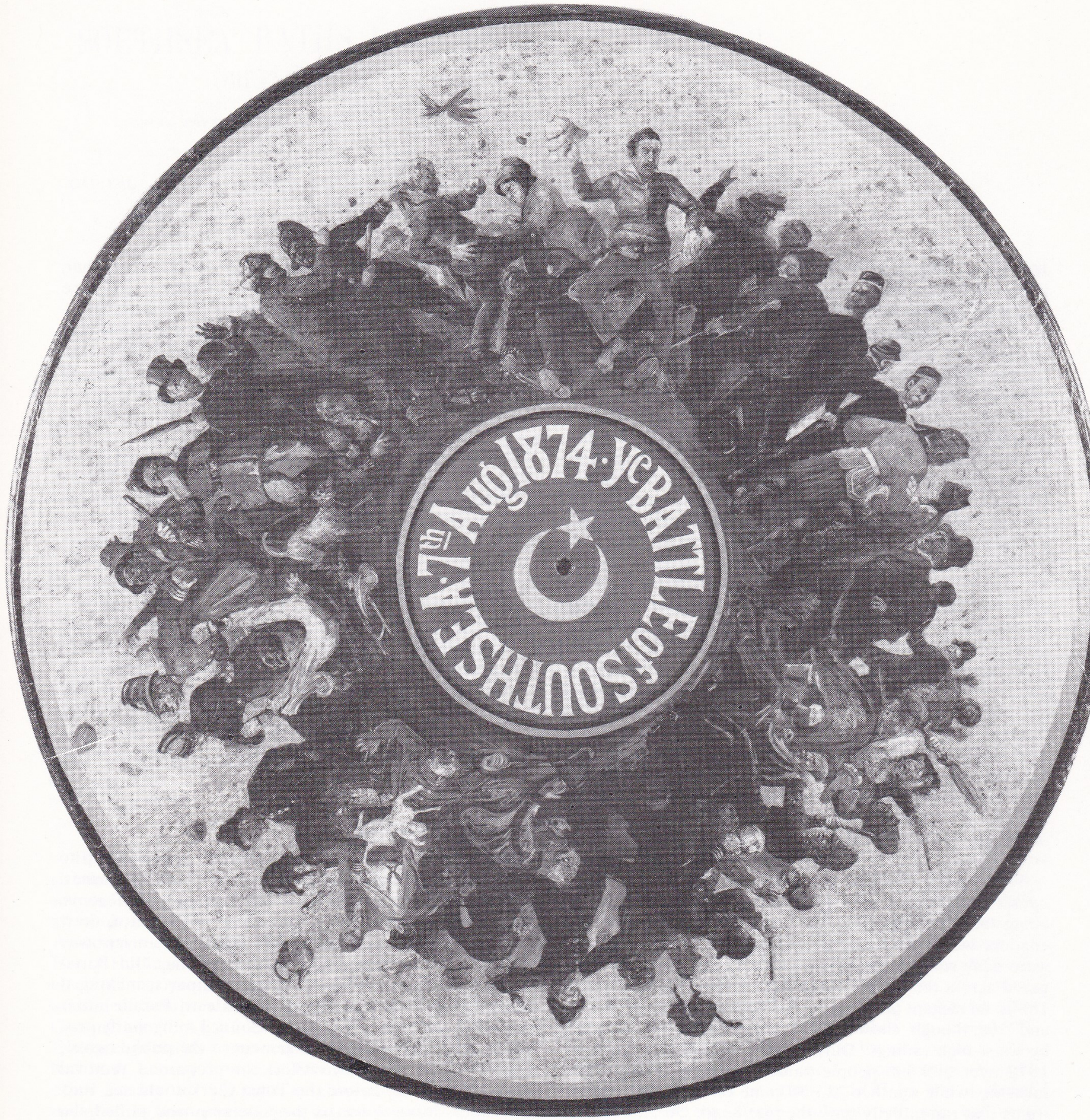
A few yards along the beach stood the Southsea Baths and Rooms. The promoters had planned 'large and handsome separate Swimming Baths for Ladies and Gentlemen, private Hot, Cold, Vapour and Douche Baths, and Reading and Assembly Rooms, which will be available also for Balls, Concerts, or other purposes'. The manager, Julius Thompson, had previously managed the Folkestone Baths and Rooms; the promoters no doubt hoped that, coming from a town with a rather more aristocratic tone than Portsmouth, Mr. Thompson would enforce the highest standards of decorum.[65] In the event, the Baths and Rooms were not greatly profitable, and in 1877 they were converted into a hotel. Was the Battle of Southsea to blame for their faltering existence? It is a speculative question, but it is sure that the users in 1874 were frightened out of their wits by the scenes surrounding them.

Had Southsea been like Folkestone, a small town dominated by one landowner, there would have been no Battle. In Folkestone the Leas, a long grassy promenade, was kept free of unsightly developers, and the *hoi polloi* were seen off by Lord Radnor's private policeman.[66] But Southsea hung on to the manufacturing and commercial suburbs of the rest of Portsmouth, whose inhabitants could hardly be kept out of the seaside areas. The presence of a uniformed porter at the gate of the Pier, invested with the authority of a special constable, merely prevented working people from going onto the Pier itself. It could not keep them from using the land immediately around it. Most of all, the Pier Company found itself unable to prevent 'the great unwashed' from rubbing shoulders with its own customers as they walked between the Pier and the Southsea Rooms.

The Battle of Southsea

In May 1874 the Pier Company decided to put a stop to the promiscous mingling of the classes around its premises, and erected a barrier between the Pier and the Rooms. Henry Ford, a Conservative councillor and solicitor, drew the Council's attention to the blocking of 'the ancient way between the Pier and Baths'. At that time, Old Portsmouth was surrounded by earthern ramparts, making it impossible to pass from the Esplanade to Parade other than along the beach. The Town Council indignantly protested 'against any such infringement of the public rights', and instructed the Town Clerk to prepare a removal notice.[67] However, before the Town Clerk could act, Barney Miller drove down to the Common and pulled the barrier down.[68] In vain did Emanuel Emanuel protest that the Ordnance Board, who owned the land, had given permission for the enclosure; the Council was implacably opposed to it.

On Tuesday 4 August, the Pier Company re-erected their barrier.[69] Protest as the Council might, the directors refused to shift, and Miller therefore moved into action on the following day. Handbills were printed, calling for a protest meeting; the time and place – 7 p.m. on the Common – were carefully chosen to ensure a confrontation. Miller's undertaker's van was used for a hustings, and the



For many years this painting of the Battle hung in The Barleymow Public House, Southsea. Although dated 7 August, the events it depicts are those of the Saturday night the following day. Many of the figures would have been well-known to Barleymow regulars
Portsmouth City Museum

Pier Company manager nervously listened as councillor Manoah Jepps tested the temperature of the meeting:

> 'A certain gentleman had told the Mayor that he defied the Corporation of Portsmouth in this matter (cries of "Oh! Oh!"). It was for them to determine, whether they should submit to the tyranny of a man, or take the proceedings into their own hands (Cries of "Pull it down").'

Up jumped Barney Miller, who outlined the history of the dispute, then called on the crowd to take direct action:

> 'They were there to claim their right of road, and they meant to have it that night ("Hear, hear", and cheers). He hoped no violence would be resorted to. Let them take it down in a business-like manner.'

And so they did. The crowd, estimated at five thousand strong, were disciplined and organized. They set to work with hammers, axes, saws, and even scaffolding, taking over an hour to demolish the heavy wooden and iron barrier. There was little enough resistance from the six or so Pier Company employees. Scandalized and frightened, the visiting fashionables had withdrawn to the Rooms. The crowd carefully and deliberately dragged the dismantled timber around to the side of the Rooms, 'that the company might have the pleasure of witnessing the conflagration'. After burning the wood and jeering the Company, the crowd slowly dispersed.

The Wednesday was the first night of the Battle of Southsea. What is remarkable is the peaceful, if determined, behaviour of the crowd. There was no violence done to persons; the few police who saw the incidents wisely stood by, and the crowd left them alone. In Miller's words, the crowd set about its task in a business-like manner; when it was completed, everyone went home. The whole affair was orderly and disciplined, almost to the point of caricature: as the barriers burned, the band on the Pier kept on playing. Even a hostile source, the *Southsea Observer*, admitted that the crowd 'was not composed of the canaille' (*canaille* is the French for rabble; the choice of language is significant, as we shall see).

The following night, the Thursday, saw more indiscriminate damage. A crowd of about five hundred, described by the *Observer* as 'chiefly juvenile roughs' and 'regular back-slum Landportarians', started to attack the Pier itself. A force of thirty police were stoned, and the crowd then burnt the hoardings that surrounded the Pier as well as some wooden benches. On the Friday another crowd, described variously as 'a very large mob' (*Hampshire Chronicle*) and as 'an assemblage of boys' (*Southsea Observer*), pelted the promenaders on the Pier and smashed the windows of the buildings. This time the police decided to hit back, and according to the *Chronicle*, 'used their staves very freely, and some who were attracted to the spot merely by curiosity came in for ugly blows'. It took some two and a half hours for the police to disperse the crowd, so fierce was the fighting.

It was, however, the Saturday night that has gone down in history as the Battle of Southsea, thanks to the painting that hung in the Barleymow public house, Castle Road, depicting the fight.[70] By eight in the evening something like three or four thousand people had gathered around the Pier; at 8.30 p.m. some stones were thrown, and police dashed into the crowd to arrest a man with an axe, Isaac Phillips. The Mayor, fearful that the rumour-ridden town was about to witness a fearful outbreak of violence, had earlier visited the Lieutenant Governor to request military backing for the police. At the same time, entirely on his own initiative, the Police Superintendent issued some 200 truncheons to employees and public-spirited defenders of the Pier. When the Mayor read the Riot Act at 8.30 p.m., calling on the crowd to disperse, they cheered him and set fire to a barrel. The Mayor went straight to General Doyle's house, and two companies of the 9th Regiment marched to the Common – some 200 men in all. Together with the police and their armed assistants, the troops started to clear the ground. Inevitably, fighting broke out.

It took two or three hours before the Common was relatively quiet once more. Most accounts stress that the troops did not play much direct part in the fighting that followed, other than intimidating the crowd (who were probably aware that each soldier had been issued with three live ball cartridges). There was general agreement among the press that 'the police and their assistants used their staves whenever an opportunity offered' (*Chronicle*). The main crowd had dispersed by 10.15 p.m., but some five hundred reassembled and threw stones. Once more the police swept them away, several men hiding in the Wheelbarrow pub at the bottom of Castle Road. By midnight all was over bar the shouting. The Sunday was pouring wet, and the Common was quiet. On Monday a crowd again assembled by the Pier, listened to speeches by Miller and Jepps, cheered their own victory, and left. The Battle of Southsea was at an end. Arguably, the crowd had won a famous victory, yet the aftermath saw a straightforward compromise, achieved after weeks of recrimination.

The Aftermath

Four issues kept the temperature high enough for antagonism to persist through much of the rest of August. The first was the relief felt by respectable Southsea at the terrible

menace that it had managed to overcome. Secondly, the Southsea spokesmen were particularly furious at the part played by many councillors in leading, or condoning, the crowd's actions. Popular feeling, on the other hand, fixed itself upon what it saw as the unlicenced aggression of the police and their assistants on the Saturday night. It also fed a more sustained campaign in support of Isaac Phillips, the man arrested for carrying an axe.

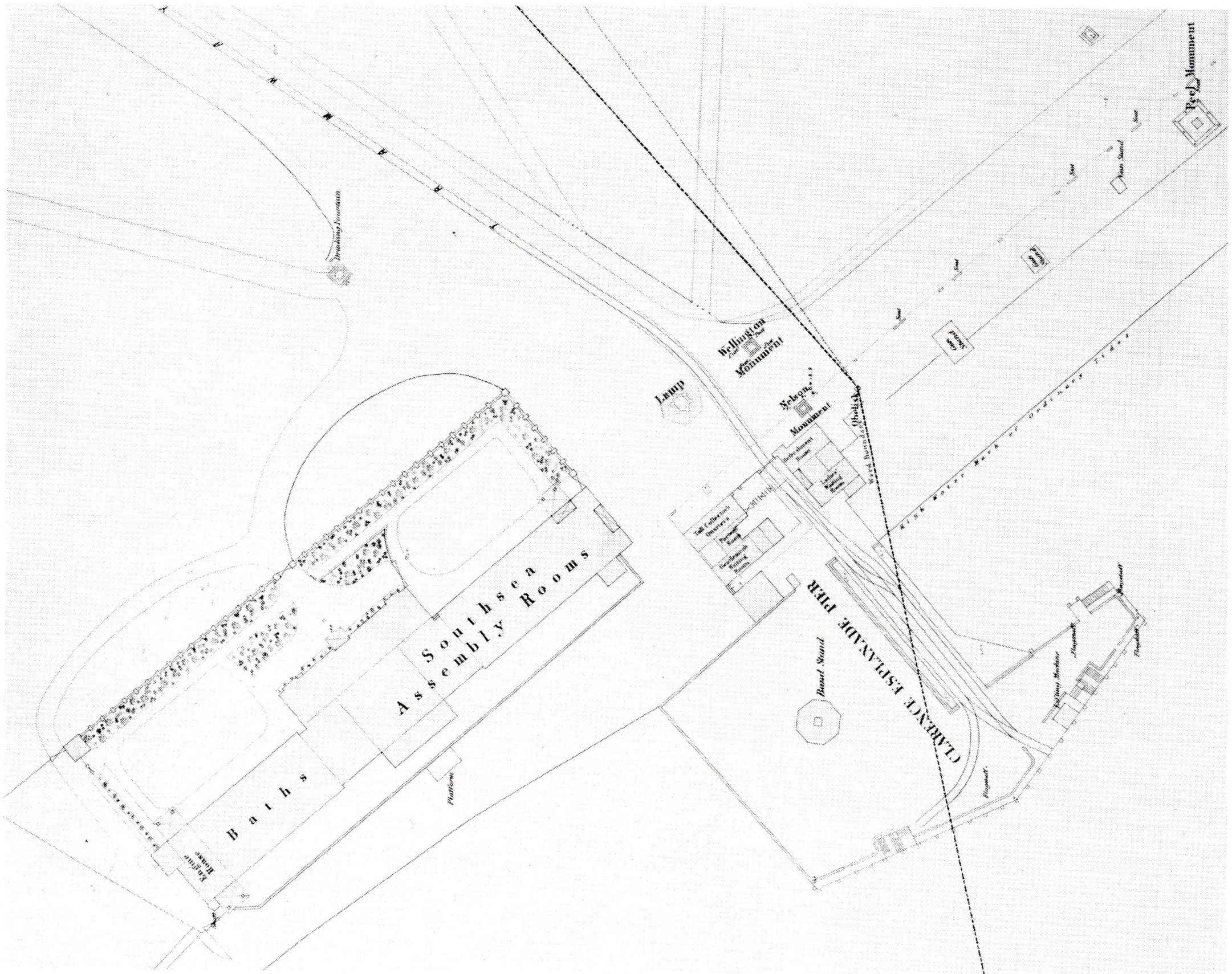
Southsea's first response to the Battle was to see it as an attempted bloody revolution. This was a myth; behind the morbid fantasies of unfortunate bourgeois dangling from every lamp post lay the image of the Paris Commune. The Paris Commune of 1871 was an attempted rising, after Emperor Napoleon III had led France in defeat against the Prussian army, led by a popularly elected city council, proclaiming a democratic republic and initiating widespread social reforms. The Commune aroused a fearful controversy at the time between its supporters and its critics.[71] The critics pointed most luridly at real and imagined terrorism that had occured under the Commune: real terrorism, such as the execution of hostages; imagined terrorism, like the wild women petrol-bombers – the *petroleuses*. For respectable Southsea, the Battle was seen as the first sign of an English re-enactment of the Commune: the crowd had the blood-dripping teeth and claws of the *petroleuses*, the *canaille*, the back-slum reds. 'The communistic element, which not long since ruined the fair city of Paris, seems to have been imported into our midst'. The *Broad Arrow*, a service journal, spoke of 'the exercise of brute force by the insurgents of Landport and Portsea'. There was concern at the proximity of un-specified 'results which it would certainly be wiser to avoid'.[72] There was also a spate of letter-writing, calling for the disciplining of those who had broken the law with such impunity.[73] 'The riot has caused considerable damage to Southsea as a watering place', said the *Chronicle*, 'and several families in consequence have already left'.[74] The fright was considerable.

Southsea's resentment fixed primarily upon the Borough Council and most particularly those councillors whom it thought were responsible for stirring things up. Six men were charged with riot and conspiracy, the Pier Company undertaking the prosecution (the police presumably felt it more prudent to stand on the sidelines); a further four were charged with riot on the Friday night. Those charged with conspiracy included three town councillors – Barney Miller, Manoah Jepps, and Charles Moorshead – and the Borough Inspector of Nuisances, Henry Sherrington (whose excuse for his activities on the Wednesday night was that he was helping to remove a public nuisance!). Two tradesmen were also named in the indictment: Edwin Seagrove, junior, son of an outfitter with premises on the Hard whose customers included the Queen; and Edward Prince, probably a Landport watchmaker but whose identification is uncertain. All these men were businessmen, and they proudly displayed the summonses in the shop windows; the dockyardmen started a subscription for their defence, whose treasurer was the local historian, W. Saunders. The magistrates, who were undoubtedly less sympathetic to the prosecution than to the defence, allowed the case to be adjourned until the Pier Company judged it more politic to abandon it.[75]

Isaac Phillips was not so fortunate. Arrested on the Saturday, he was held in custody until Tuesday, when he was whisked before two magistrates and sentenced to three months hard labour. The sentence aroused deep anger, not only among working people but also among many community leaders from the middle class. From the evidence, there is little doubt that Phillips, a labourer on the Dockyard extension, took his axe along to the Common; he was said to have been drunk, and aggressive. Nevertheless, the verdict must stand condemned, simply because the two magistrates – against all natural justice – had a deep interest in the prosecution of the case. They were Andrew Nance, Pier Company Director, and George Curtis, jnr., who apparently owned some shares in the Company. The sole evidence presented in the trial was that of a single policeman, whose own behaviour had not been above reproach (Phillips was in hospital recovering from 'an incised wound of the left side of the scalp about half an inch in extent together with some slight contusion of the surrounding parts').[76] The trial, bluntly, stank to high heaven, although we should take it as highly probable that Phillips was guilty of the offence as charged.

The radicals organized two responses to Phillips' trial. The first was to petition the Home Office for his release. Huge crowds gathered in the People's Park (then simply wasteland opposite the Landport railway station), to hear Howell, Councillor George Cunningham (a Landport master cabinet-maker), and Sergeant Gazelee (radical parliamentary candidate) hold forth on Phillips' case, and call for subscriptions to support his wife and family.The meeting handed in £3 10*s*, called upon the Home Secretary to release Phillips, and finished with three cheers for the Queen and three groans for Superintendent Barber. Moreover the Town Council took up Phillips's case, on Killpartrick's initiative. However, the Home Office refused to remit Phillips' sentence, and he stayed in Winchester prison, his wife refused poor relief because of the money she was getting from the subscription.[77]

Linked to dissatisfaction over Phillips' trial was the demand for a stipendiary magistrate. The sentence on Phillips called the whole magisterial system into doubt. Who were these men, anyway, asked Gazelee?; 'simply men



Detail from Ordnance Survey, Hampshire sheet LXXXIII.11.20
Portsmouth City Records Office

who had been more fortunate in business than their fellows, a little sharper in business it might be'. Howell favoured a full-time, professional lawyer on the bench: 'unconnected with the town, and above all those petty influences that turned the others either that way or this'. Miller, in the council chamber, defended his part in the Battle as justified 'when magistrates were acting in defiance of the law they were bound to maintain'. The Council, however, failed to take this issue up. Indeed, there is some suggestion that the radicals felt that their fellow-liberals had abandoned them entirely: at one meeting in late August the Mayor clashed with Howell and Killpartrick, refusing to allow Phillips' case to be discussed.[78]

The radicals were successful, however, in securing an inquiry into allegations of police brutality. The Council unanimously agreed to instruct the Watch Committee to 'institute a thorough investigation in the matter and report thereon with all practicable despatch', after hearing Howell allege that he had been manhandled on the Common, and hooting Alderman Emanuel Emanuel so that he was unable to get a hearing.[79] Twelve citizens appeared before the Watch Committee to complain of police attacks. They included a customs officer, who was walking down Gordon Road with his sons when a policeman attacked him from behind; he alleged that he had seen three teenage schoolboys carrying special constables' truncheons, boasting of the damage they had inflicted with them. Another complaint came from a Portsea soda water manufacturer, William Tarring, who still recalled the attack as an old man. He remembered going to the Common on the Friday

> out of curiosity but taking no active part I stood close to a fat sergeant and was just about to ask him what it was all about when I felt his truncheon on my head and I was clutching at his belt. Just at that moment I saw more stars, than there ever were in the firmament.'

After recovering, Tarring recollected his rights as a British citizen, and swollen with indignation returned to demand an explanation,

> . . . I had only got halfway across the Common and was standing quietly under a lamp when the rush came and I had my head laid open, the blood streaming down my back.'

Several policemen set about Tarring, laying his head open in three places and leaving half a dozen bruises on his

The Pier in the 1870's
Portsmouth City Museum

body. On the whole, however, those who had been beaten by policemen preferred to keep quiet about it, understandably preferring discretion to valour. As Tarring said, 'very few came forward, and those who did were half-hearted about it'.[80] A further eleven witnesses appeared in support of the police action (at least three of whom were Pier shareholders), and the Watch Committee found itself faced with hopelessly conflicting testimony.

The findings of the Watch Committee are worth quoting at length.

After blaming the Pier Company's servants for the violence of the Friday – the first serious fighting of the Battle – the Committee concluded:

> 'That while the Police are entitled to commendation for their patient endurance for a considerable time of the shower of stones and brickbats by which they were assailed they were wanting in discretion and were not justified in pursuing the people beyond a reasonable limit or in the indiscriminate use of their staves when no resistance was offered.
>
> As already noticed, the issue of staves on the Saturday was the unauthorized act of the Superintendent of Police, who committed a grave error in judgement and is highly censurable in having yielded in the application made to him for the purpose by the Pier Company's Secretary, and your Committee question the legality of putting staves into the hands of irresponsible persons as in the present instance, however reliable for a discreet and proper use of such weapons they may have been considered. It is due to the Superintendent to say that he greatly regrets the issue of staves on the occasion.'

The police hardly came out of the report, as was reported in the *Southsea Observer*, with 'flying colours'.[82] Although all radical attempts to discipline Superintendent Barber were defeated, the criticisms made were more open, wide-ranging and sharp than anything that is probable, or even possible, for police authorities today.

What of the radicals? Defeated on the three questions on which they challenged the local state – Phillips' sentence, stipendiary magistrates, and Superintendent Barber's offence – they were left with little more than memories of their part in the Battle itself. Like the bourgeois myth of the threatened Commune, the radicals had a myth of their own, in which they strode about the stage of history like ancient republican heroes. The tree under which the radicals spoke in People's Park was known as 'the Reformer's Tree'. They thought of themselves as asserting ancient rights:

> 'The people's blood began to boil,
> When they saw this robbery of the soil,
> The free-right of the sons of toil,'

ran the ballad written to commemorate the Battle.[83] Barney Miller used the language of a free-born Englishman, descendant of Robin Hood, Cromwell and Bunyan: 'the time had come when resistance was virtue, and forbearance a crime'. So did John Augustus Howell Howell: 'it was a disgrace to the Watch Committee if they allowed Englishmen, women and children to be knocked about as they had been'. A letter in the local paper, signed by Victory's Anchor, recalled the puritan heritage, praising Miller and Jepps as the 'Borough Hampdens'.[84] There was military language in plenty: Charles Moorhead, the coun-

cillor, was spoken of as one of the 'Generals of Division . . . He had the honour of being a rioter, for under the circumstances, it was an honour'.[85] Manoah Jepps was known for some time as 'General Jepps'. Lastly, the language of the Commune and the Jacobin tradition was adopted as well; the crowds were baptized 'the patriots', 'the patriot party', and happily sang patriotic songs.[86] This was the radical myth, drawing its imagery from a variety of sources, nourishing and sustaining its own identity and sense of tradition.

Conclusion

The one, great achievement of the radicals was their part in leading the crowd to victory. 'The cause was won and the right of way was maintained', wrote Tarring. The original enclosure would have stretched as far as Victory's Anchor, which it would have removed from the public view. It would have obstructed the footpath between Southsea beach and Old Portsmouth. The Pier Company managed to proceed with their extensions to the Pier itself, enclosing a very small area between the Pier and the Rooms. In return, the Long Curtain path was opened up, allowing pedestrians to walk along the seafront as they had done before.[87] The Pier had rather a sad history; after some years of victorian prosperity, it started to lose custom to the Harbour Station and South Parade Pier. In 1941 it and the Southsea Rooms, already delapidated, were destroyed in an air raid.[88] They had outlived their usefulness, and when the land was redeveloped it was to carry Billy Manning's Funfair (significantly, one of the roundabouts is painted with scenes of wartime American soldiers in Britain). Thus Southsea surrendered the Pier to the demands of a mass, commercial tourist industry that no longer catered for the gentry alone.

If the Pier outlived its purpose, however, the principles behind the Battle have remained important. The Common has been preserved intact, open to all and exclusive to none. There has been pressure, to 'develop' parts of, even all, the Common. One proposal that dies hard, for instance, is the idea of turning stretches of the Common into a car park; another is to build hotels and other amenities along the Esplanade. Both proposals have been defeated, in what *The News* has called a victory for 'common sense'.[89] The long term importance of the Battle of Southsea was that it created a climate of opinion, based on a tradition of action, that helped make the Common sacred.

The Glorious Battle at Southsea.

COME list to me, a tale I'll tell
About a battle fought so well,
The sad disaster that befel
At the glorious battle of Southsea.
Now the Parson too and the little Jew,
The White mushroom, and the rest of the crew,
Had made up their minds the public to do,
And to line their greedy pockets too,
So they schemed so sly, and so slyly schemed,
While the stupid Council slept and dreamed,
And for a time it really seemed
Ther'd be no battle at Southsea.

The people's blood began to boil,
When they saw this robbery of the soil,
The free-right of the sons of toil,
The public highway at Southsea.
So with axe and hammer they cut and slashed,
And the mighty barrier they hacked and gashed,
With battering rams they broke and smashed
The Company's barrier at Southsea.
Jepsey and Barney and all concerned,
Soon on the Company the tables turned,
With some penny-royal the thing was burned,
Upon the Beach at Southsea
Come list to me, &c.

Now the following night the mushroom thought
That the public should have a lesson taught,
So with great array their force they brought
Upon the Pier at Southsea.
So sticks and bludgeons were handed round,
And the fire engine was on the ground,
To cool the courage of those around
The Company's Pier at Southsea.
And soon also with this array,
The mushroom man brought on the fray,
And then there was the devil to pay
At the Company's Pier at Southsea.
Come list to me, &c.

Now a duce of a stew they all got in.
When they found they were punished for their sin
So the Bobbies were sent for to stop the din,
Round the Company's Pier at Southsea.
The little Jew ran home in a fright,
The mushroom turned a deadly White,
When they found they'd rais'd a serious fight
Round the Company's Pier at Southsea.
Brickbats and stones in showers flew,
And heads and shins were broken too,
The Mayor and the Super were in a stew,
In the glorious battle of Southsea.
Come list to me, &c.

Next night a thousand 'specials' came,
All sworn to conquer or die game,
The porters too all swore the same,
On the Company's Pier at Southsea.
The Mayor he read the Riot Act,
And 'ere the Pier had been attack'd,
The soldiers came, and the people backed
From the Company's Pier at Southsea.
The populace now had had their fill,
With the gallant 'Ninth' they'd no ill-will,
So they were left in charge, and may be still,
Of the Company's Pier at Southsea.
Come list to me, &c.

Three cheers for the Queen and her noble sons,
And all the other Royal guns,
Especially to their little ones,
Now the battle's o'er at Southsea
May the Parson be choked with one of his pills,
May a pig's foot stick in the little Jew's gills,
May the Directors suffer humanity's ills,
For this wretched squabble at Southsea.
In years to come if the same body rules,
They'll be jeered & laughed at and look like fools,
And one and all become the toads-tools
Of the mushroom man at Southsea.
Come list to me, &c.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Broadsheet ballad, collected by W. H. Saunders
Portsmouth City Museum

APPENDIX

Associated Interests of Directors in Clarence Esplanade Pier Company.

EMANUEL EMANUEL (Chairman)
Born 1808, London. Gold and silversmith, London and Portsea. Developer and property owner with rental of £328. Director of Steam Packet Co., Town Councillor, Alderman and Magistrate. Mayor 1867–8.

ANDREW NANCE
Born 1811, Portsmouth. Farmer, railway carrier, and managing director of Floating Bridge Co., Railway shareholder and director. Property owner with 1873 rental of £990. Father died 1853 leaving £12,000 personalty. Poor Law Guardian, Town Councillor, Alderman and Magistrate.

WILLIAM GRANT CHAMBERS
Born 1810, Portsmouth. Tea Dealer and Grocer, High St. Chairman Landport & Southsea Tram Co., Director of Floating Bridge and of Steam Packet Co. Property owner with rental of £345 in 1873. Town Councillor, Alderman and Magistrate. Mayor in 1863.

GEORGE SHEPPARD
Born 1815, Fordingbridge. Master Shoemaker, employing 12 men in 1851. Chairman, Portsmouth Improvement Commission, Town Councillor in late 1840s till early 1870s. Mayor 1869–70.

EDWARD KENT PARSONS
Born Calcutta 1822. Gentleman, Southsea. Director, L. & S. Tram Co., Floating Bridge Co., Baths and Rooms Co., and of Southsea Pier Hotel Co., President Portsmouth Liberal Association.

SOURCES:
In the main this information comes from newspapers, company records, and corporation minutes. The sources are described in the bibliography to my thesis, *Bourgeois Portsmouth: Social Relations in a Victorian Dockyard Town, 1815–75*, University of Warwick, 1979.

REFERENCES

The following abbreviations apply throughout:

HT	Hampshire Telegraph
SOVD	Southsea Observer and Visitors Directory
PRO	Public Records Office
PCRO	Portsmouth City Records Office
Parl Papers	Parliamentary Papers
PCL	Portsmouth City Library

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5 Bishop, C. H., *Folkestone: The Story of a Town*, 1973, pp. 119–20.
6 *Op. cit.*
7 HT, 13 Aug 1821.
8 HT, 12 May 1823, 11 Oct 1824, 29 Oct 1827.
9 HT, 27 Jan, 23 June 1849.
10 HT, 11, 25 Mar 1848.
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14 Fleming, T., *An Essay on Southsea*, 1884.
15 Information based on rate books and census schedules for 1851.
16 *Portsmouth Times*, 22 June, 6 July, 10, 17 Aug 1850.
17 This was used, typically, in a Chartist poster of 1842: PCRO, 11A/20/104.
18 HT, 14, Feb, 21 Feb 1852.
19 Correspondence of Landport and Southsea Improvement Commission, 21, 28 Oct, 11 Nov, 4 Dec 1858, PCRO ICL 1/1.
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22 *Republican*, 15 May 1871, HT, 30 Dec 1868.
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24 HT, 2 July 1887.
25 HT, 14 Nov 1857.
26 *Portsmouth Guardian*, 5 Dec 1861; *Portsmouth Chronicle*, 31 Aug 1861; HT, 19 May 1849, 2 June 1866, 24 June 1865.
27 HT, 8 Jan 1887.
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29 *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Small Tenements Assessment Act*, Parl. Papers 1854, sess. 2, vii, pp. 178–9.
30 HT, 23 Apr 1870.
31 SOVD, 7 Aug 1874.
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[35] HT, 10 May 1860.
[36] HT, 2 June, 13 June, 14 July, 18 July 1866.
[37] Compare Bailey, V., 'Salvation Army Riots, the "Skeleton Army" and Legal Authority in the Provincial Town', in A. Donajgrodzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, 1977.
[38] Anon, *A Story of Ten Years' Work*, n.d. (1885), p. 6.
[39] *Inspector's Report on Soldiers' Institutes*, Parl. Papers 1862, xxxii; HT, 11, 14 Sept 1867.
[40] Field, J., *Bourgeois Portsmouth,* chs. 6–8.
[41] Pier Company Records, General Meeting, Oct 1872, PCRO, 682A 1/1. HT 5 Nov 1864.
[42] Annual Reports; Riley, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
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[44] Prospectus, Southsea Baths and Rooms Co., Saunders Coll., vol. i, f. 25, PCL, HT, 3 Dec 1864, 29 Jan 1870.
[45] *Post Office Directory*, 1874; HT, 16 June 1860, 3 Oct 1863.
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[52] HT, 22 Jan 1870.
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[55] *Hampshire Courier*, 1 July 1816; Bankruptcy Court, Jan 1833, PRO, B 4/45.
[56] HT, 21 Mar, 27 May 1868.
[57] *British Army Despatch*, 5, 12, 19 April 1850.
[58] HT, 23 June 1849.
[59] HT, 24 Oct, 31 Oct 1825.
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[61] Gates, W. G., *Portsmouth in the Past*, p. 89.
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[66] Bishop, *op. cit.*
[67] Council Minutes, 11 May 1874, PCRO, CM 1/5.
[68] SOVD, 7 Aug 1874.
[69] The sources for the Battle are: HT, 12, 15, 19, 26 and 29 Aug 1874 SOVD, 7, 14, 21, 28 Aug 1874: *Hampshire Chronicle* 15 Aug 1874; the Watch Committee's report in Council Minutes, 24 Aug 1874, PCRO CM 1/5; Home Office Papers on Southsea Riot, PRO, HO, 45/9368/36956.
[70] I have discussed the painting (which I wrongly attribute to W. Bryant, rather than the other possible painter, A. Dugan) in 'When the Riot Act was Read', *History Workshop Journal* x, 1980.
[71] See Harrison, R., *The English Defence of the Commune, 1871*, 1971.
[72] SOVD, 14 Aug, 21 Aug 1874.
[73] Compare Thompson, E. P., *Writing by Candlelight*, 1980, pp. 39–48.
[74] *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 Aug 1874.
[75] HT, 12, 15, 19 Aug 1874.
[76] Carrington, a local surgeon, made a report which is preserved in the Home Office file, 28 Aug 1874.
[77] SOVD, 28 Aug 1874; HT, 26 Aug, 30 Sept; Council Minutes, 31 Aug 1874; also see the Home Office file.
[78] SOVD, 28 Aug 1874.
[79] Council Minutes, 10 Aug; HT, 12 Aug 1874.
[80] Tarring complained at the time to the Watch Committee, HT, 12 Aug 1874; his reminiscences are kept in the City Museum.
[81] Among others who were issued staves were the gentlemen of the Army and Navy Club, the hearties of the Cricket Club, and three pupil-teachers of the National Society.
[82] SOVD, 21 Aug 1874.
[83] The Ballad is in Saunders Coll., vol, i, f. 73.
[84] SOVD, 21 Aug, HT, 12 Aug 1874.
[85] SOVD, 21 Aug 1874.
[86] HT, 19 Aug 1874.
[87] Sketch Map by Col. R. Burnaby, RE, 18 Feb 1875, Local Map Collection, no. 31553, PCL.
[88] Francis, D., 'Portsmouth's Piers', *Journal of Portsmouth Polytechnic Industrial Archaeology Society*, ii, 1969, pp. 26–9.
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